BRIEF COMMUNICATION

THE SPECKLED BROWN SNAKE *PSEUDONAJA GUTTATA* PARKER: AN ADDITION TO THE FAUNA OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On 29.v.81, at 1715 hrs, B. Miller and J. Bredl, Jr., captured a curl snake, *Suta suta*, which was entering a crack in the ground at Goyder's Lagoon, South Australia (27°37′S, 139°10′E). It was a large male specimen (SVL = 565 mm), and it promptly disgorged another snake which it had swallowed, tail first. The disgorged snake was alive and, subsequently, identified as a speckled brown snake, *Pseudonaja guttata* (Fig. 1). This is the first recorded specimen of *P. guttata* in S.A. and represents an extension of the known range of the species of approximately 400 km (Fig. 2).[1,2]

The specimen (S. Aust. Mus., R20582) is a juvenile female with the following characteristics: SVL = 265 mm; tail length = 45 mm; scales at midbody = 21; ventrals = 202; subcaudals = 55 + (tip of tail is missing); supralabials = 6 + 6; infralabials = 7 + 7; nasal and preocular scales in point contact; postoculars = 2 + 2; canthal ridge weakly evident; iris reddish forming an incomplete circle; buccal cavity predominantly black; dorsum uniform pale fawn with minute, widely scattered black spots; venter cream coloured, barely flushed with orangish pigment at the mid-ventral line. This description of colour corresponds closely with the predominant colouration of *P. guttata* from Northern Territory and Queensland.[1] Specimens examined from those

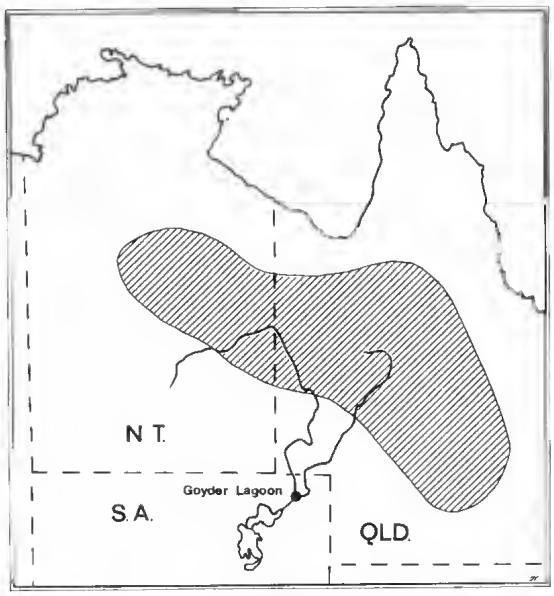

Fig. 2. Distribution of *Pseudonaja guttata*. Shaded area is range of species at headwaters of Georgina and Diamantina rivers (from Cogger 1979).

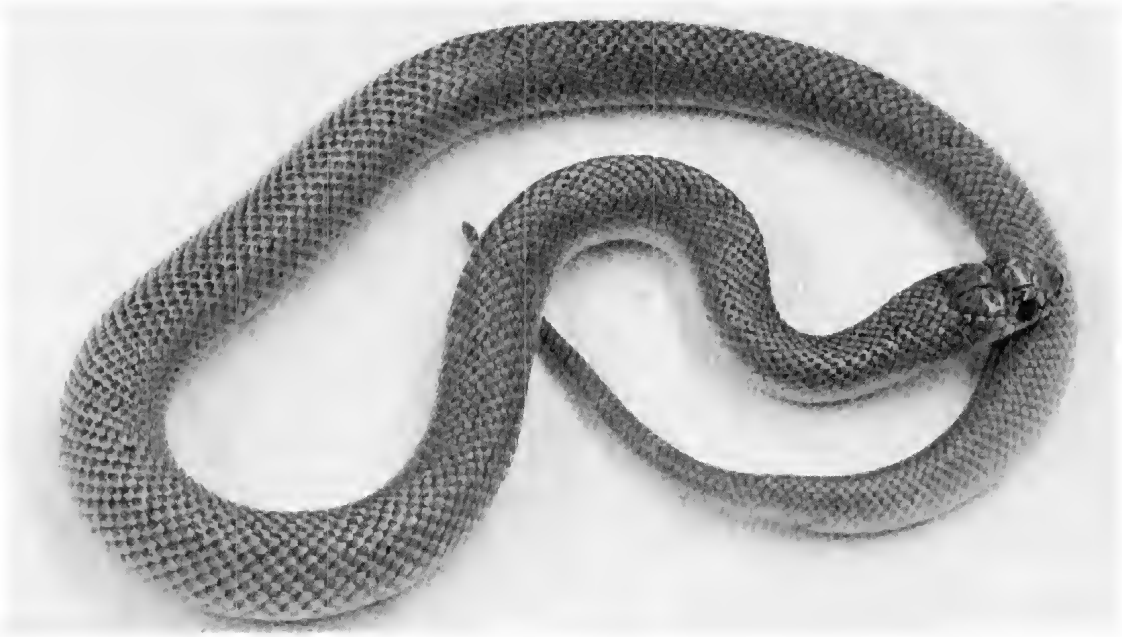

Fig. 1. *Pseudonaja guttata* (SAM R20582), Goyder's Lagoon, S.A. (SVL = 265 mm).

states formed two populations, separated by an apparent gap of some 300–400 km.[2] Northern Territory populations of *P. guttata* are restricted to the "black soils" of the Barkly Tableland at the headwaters of the Georgina River.[1] Queensland populations examined by Gillam[2] are in the Cooper Creek and Diamantina River drainages; the latter river flows through Goyder's Lagoon. The snake from Goyder's Lagoon is most like the Queensland population in number of midbody scales, subcaudals and infralabials. This agreement, as well as a common occurrence and close proximity along the Diamantina River drainage, suggests that the population of *P. guttata* at Goyder's Lagoon is an extension of the Queensland population.

Goyder's Lagoon is a broad floodplain with sinuous channels and low levees, partly overlain with dunes. It consists of a partially degraded, mixed cover of natural scrubland, low fringing woodland, herbaceous ground cover and hummock grassland, used extensively for livestock grazing. Dominant native plants include *Eucalyptus microtheca, Muehlenbeckia cunninghami* and *Bauhinia carronii*.[3] In addition to *Pseudonaja guttata* and *Suta suta*, the area supports populations of the inland taipan, *Oxyuranus microlepidotus* (SAM R14649, R14851A & B, R18051–52, R20583), known only from the Diamantina and Cooper Creek drainages in S.A. but found throughout southwestern Queensland.[4,5] Common and western brown snakes, *P. textilis* (R19854–55, R19943) and *P. nuchalis* (R5326), respectively, whipsnake, *Demansia psammophis* (R19851), woma python, *Aspidites ramsayi* (R14720), Children's python, *Liasis childreni* (R15303) and carpet python, *Python spilotes* (R19222), also occur in the area[6,7] Undoubtedly, future collecting at Goyder's Lagoon will locate other species previously believed to be restricted to adjacent areas of Queensland and Northern Territory.

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[1]**Cogger, H. G.** (1979). "Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia". (revised ed.) Reed, Sydney.

[2]**Gillam, M. W.** (1979). The genus *Pseudonaja* (Serpentes: Elapidae) in the Northern Territory. Res. Bull. (1) Terr. Parks & Wildl. Comm., Alice Springs, N.T.

[3]**CSIRO.** (1977). Environments of South Australia, Province 8 Northern Arid, Cooper's Creek Environmental Association. CSIRO Divn Land Use Res. pp. 208-211.

[4]**Covacevich, J., McDowell, S. B., Tanner, C. & Mengdon, G. A.** (1980). The relationship of the Taipan, *Oxyuranus scutellatus*, and the Small-Scaled Snake, *Oxyuranus microlepidotus* (Serpentes: Elapidae). In Banks, C. B. & Martin, A. A., (eds.), Proc Melbourne Herpetological Symposium, Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens, Melbourne. pp. 161–168.

[5]**Broad, A. J., Sutherland, S. K., Tanner, C. & Covacevich, J.** (1979). Electrophoretic, enzyme, and preliminary toxicity studies of the venom of the Small-Scaled Snake, *Parademansia microlepidota* (Serpentes; Elapidae), with additional data on its distribution. Mem. Qld Mus. 19: 319–329.

[6]**Schwaner, T. D. & Miller, B.** (personal observations, April 1981).

[7]**Mirtschin, P. J.** (1980). Report on visit to Goyders Lagoon, April, 1980. Unpublished.

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